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UNCLAS HELSINKI 000110

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: FINLAND: REACTION TO TURKISH INITIATIVE ON CYPRUS

REF: SECSTATE 16987

1. (SBU) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to officials from the MFA's Southeast Europe and EU Affairs offices. The Finns expressed disappointment with the rapidity of the Cypriot government's rejection of the Jan. 24 Turkish proposal; however, the GoF was not surprised by the Cypriot rejection and expects further posturing from both sides. Upcoming Cypriot elections (May) probably influenced the decision since many politicians are adopting a hard line toward Turkish initiatives in hopes of bolstering their public support. The GoF will continue to work with and through the EU to encourage both sides to resume dialogue as soon as possible.

2. (SBU) The Finns opined that Turkey's initiative was helpful as a basis for further discussion and as an attempt to jump-start the stalled process; however, there was nothing new or groundbreaking in the Turkish proposal, only a restatement of existing Turkish obligations. Referring to the statement by EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn (a Finn), the Finnish officials said that by signing the Ankara Protocol in 2005, Turkey had made commitments to the EU and all its Member States, including Cyprus, and was expected to meet them fully. In particular, Turkey was already obligated to open ports to Cyprus and to take immediate and concrete steps to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community. From this perspective, the Turkish proposal, while welcome, was not as substantive as it could be. An indication of Turkey's willingness to clarify and implement reasonable regulations governing assistance and aid programs to the Turkish Cypriots was an important next step.

3. (SBU) Finally, when asked what the U.S. could do to facilitate a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue, the Finnish officials said that the U.S. could play an important role in the UN Security Council. Russia was blocking Security Council endorsement of the UNSYG recommendations for a comprehensive settlement. American efforts to encourage Moscow to drop its opposition to an official endorsement would be helpful.

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